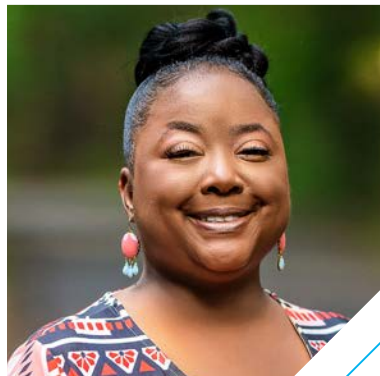


Charnette Darrington Zaskoda

ASTHMA



My name is Charnette Darrington Zaskoda and I have severe asthma, which was aggressively triggered by Hurricane Harvey.

Asthma is a respiratory condition marked by spasms in the bronchi of the lungs, causing breathing difficulty. It usually results from an allergic reaction or other sensitivity.

I will never forget Hurricane Harvey. We suffered from extensive rain and street flooding. Once Harvey went into a tropical depression, the flooding stopped and I went back to work on the recovery team at the hospital.

When I arrived at work, I got out of my car and inhaled pollen that made my nose start to burn and itch. Then my chest started feeling constricted. By the time I got off the elevator to walk to my department I was wheezing and I knew it was time to take my inhaler.

I used my inhaler and then needed it again two hours later. I then had a sudden and severe asthma attack, which left me incapable of working anymore. I barely made it back to the department office, and then my co-workers rushed me down to the ED in a wheelchair. They put me on a steroid IV and continuous nebulizer treatments. My breathing was still subpar, so I was admitted to the hospital for three days.

Charnette Darrington was a patient speaker at the ATS 2019 International Conference in Dallas, TX.

“Never in a lifetime would I believe some super pollen from [Hurricane] Harvey would have set off my asthma so severely.”

Sometimes you wish you would have called in sick! Never in a lifetime would I believe some super pollen from Harvey would have set off my asthma so severely.

Unfortunately, in addition to a hospitalization, this episode delayed my bronchial thermoplasty. The delay caused me to get sick several times, and I was not able to complete my final surgery until November 2018. Since my bronchial thermoplasty was completed, I have noticed small improvements in my life. Speaking in a regular rhythm had become a problem for me. I can do that now without sounding breathy. I cough less. I enjoy being outside longer. I still get asthma exacerbations, but they are better managed. I'm even attempting to exercise more.

In addition to my asthma, I have many health issues related to the steroid that keeps my asthma under control, such as Cushing syndrome, which resulted in osteopenia and a broken foot, as well as diabetes. I'm hopeful that a new drug or treatment can be developed in the future.

I am appreciative of all the progress that you all have made but I look forward to more advances. ■

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the airways of your lungs. When you have asthma, your airways become swollen. This swelling (inflammation) causes the airways to make thick, sticky secretions called mucus. Asthma also causes the muscles in and around your airways to get very tight or constrict. This swelling, mucus, and tight muscles can make your airways narrower than normal and it becomes very hard for you to get air into and out of your lungs. Frequent lung or sinus infections can cause asthma. Irritants that can also cause asthma are:

- Exhaust fumes from cars, buses, trucks etc.
- Chemicals like garden sprays.
- Molds and dust.
- Strong odors from paint, perfumes, colognes, hair spray, deodorants, and cleaning products.
- Tobacco smoke from cigarettes, pipes, or cigars.
- Temperature or weather changes.
- Stress or exercise.
- Medications, including aspirin and betablockers (heart or blood pressure medicine).
- Sulfites in foods such as dried fruits, wine and beer.

Learn more: ATS Patient Education Series.

"What is Asthma?" New York, NY.

www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/asthma.pdf